His Grace the Lord Archbiſhop of Canterbury's *Letter to the Right Reverend the Lords Biſhops of his Province.*

To the Right Reverend the Lord Biſhop of *Oxford.*

Reverend Brother,

MY Writing to You, and the reſt of our Brethren at this time, is occaſion'd by a ſenſible growth of Vice and Prophaneneſs in the Nation: which, to the great Affliction of all good men, appears not only in the corrupt practices of *particular* perſons; but alſo in the Endeavours that are uſed to ſubvert the *general* Principles of our holy Religion. And this with a boldneſs and openneſs, far beyond the examples of paſt times; ſo that if a ſpeedy ſtop be not put to ſuch *National* Provocations, we have juſt cauſe to fear they may bring down the heavieſt Judgments of God upon Us; The preventing whereof belongs more immediately to us, who are the *Miniſters of Chriſt*; and as ſuch, are obliged to the utmoſt care and watchfulneſs in oppoſing theſe *Inſtruments of Satan.*

I doubt not, but many of the *Parochial Clergy* are ſufficiently ſenſible both of their own duty and the danger we are in: In the Cities of *London* and *Weſtminſter*, and other places, I am ſure the good effects of their

diligence have been very evident of late years. But in ſome Parts that are more remote, all of them may not ſo well underſtand either the *Arts* or the *Induſtry* of theſe Enemies of Religion: And therefore I thought it a Duty incumbent on the Station wherein Providence has placed me, to deſire of You, and the reſt of our Brethren, to warn the Clergy under your Care, of theſe attempts againſt Religion and Virtue; and to excite them to a Diligence proportionable to the Danger; and to ſuggeſt to them ſuch Methods as are moſt likely to work a *General Reformation.*

With this requeſt, I ſend You ſuch Particulars as, in my Opinion, are very neceſſary to be preſſed upon your Clergy for the attaining ſo deſirable an End. As,

I. That in their own Lives, and the Government of their own Families, they would make themſelves *Examples* of a ſober and regular Converſation. It is the Apoſtles Reaſoning, *If a man know not how to rule his own houſe* (and much more *his own Life and Actions*) *how ſhall he take care of the Church of God?* The true method of working a Reformation *abroad*, is to lay the foundation *at home*; which alone can give our *Reproofs* a juſt Weight and Authority: but till that is done, no *Exhortations*, whether in publick or private, can either be offer'd with decency, or receiv'd with reverence.

II. To Piety, they ſhould add *Prudence* in all their Actions and Behaviour: which even in *Private Chriſtians* is a great Ornament to Religion; but in *Publick Teachers* is a moſt neceſſary qualification for the due diſcharge of their

their Miniſtry. A *Mildneſs* of temper, with a *Gravity* and *Calmneſs* in their Converſation, will not fail to gain them a general Love and Eſteem among their Neighbours: and a diſcreet Caution in their *Words* and *Actions*, will preſerve them from thoſe little Imprudences that are ſometimes ſo ſenſible an Obſtruction to the good Endeavours of well-meaning Men. Perſons in *Holy Orders* are not only bound, in the conduct of their Lives, to conſider what is lawful or unlawful *in it ſelf*, but alſo what is decent or indecent *in Them*, with reſpect to their *Character* and *Function*: *Abſtaining from all appearance of evil; and giving no Offence in any thing, that the Miniſtry be not blamed.*

III. While Our *Enemies* are ſo very induſtrious in ſeeking out Objections againſt the Chriſtian Religion; it becomes the *Clergy* (who are ſet apart for the Vindication of it) to be no leſs diligent in their Preparations for its Defence: By acquainting themſelves thorowly with the rational grounds of Chriſtianity, and the true ſtate of ſuch Points as are the Subjects of our preſent Controverſies; together with the Objections which are uſually made by our Adverſaries of all ſorts, and the Effectual Anſwers that have been returned to them by ſo many Eminent Writers of our own Church: That ſo they may be ready, on all occaſions, to do juſtice and honour to our Religion; and be able to expoſe the folly and ignorance of theſe Gainſaying Men. The Cauſe which God has put into our hands, is undoubtedly good; but the beſt cauſe may ſuffer by the weakneſs of its Advocate: and when this happens in the matter of Religion, it gives the Adverſary an occa-

ſion of Triumph, and is apt to ſtagger the faith even of ſincere and unprejudic'd Chriſtians.

IV. It were to be wiſht, that the Clergy of every Neighbourhood, would agree upon frequent *Meetings*, to conſult for the good of Religion in general, and to adviſe with one another about any difficulties that may happen in their particular Cures. By what Methods any Evil Cuſtom may moſt eaſily be broken; How a ſinner may be moſt effectually reclaimed; and (in general) How each of them in their ſeveral circumſtances may contribute moſt to the advancement of Religion. Such *Conſultations* as theſe, beſides the mutual benefit of advice and inſtruction, will be a natural means to excite the zeal of ſome, to reduce the over-eagerneſs of others to a due temper, and to provoke All to a Religious Emulation in the improvement of *Piety* and *Order* within their reſpective Pariſhes. And Theſe *Meetings* might ſtill be made a greater advantage to the Clergy in carrying on the *Reformation* of Mens *Lives* and *Manners*, by inviting the *Church-Wardens* of their ſeveral Pariſhes, and other pious perſons among the *Laity*, to joyn with them in the Execution of the moſt probable methods that can be ſuggeſted for thoſe good Ends. And we may very reaſonably expect the happy Effects of ſuch a concurrence, from the Viſible Succeſs of that Noble Zeal wherewith ſo many about the great *Cities* in my Neighbourhood, do promote true Piety, and a *Reformation of Manners*. And therefore I deſire you that you will particularly excite your Clergy to the procuring ſuch aſſiſtances as theſe, for the more effectual diſcharge of their own duty.

V. It

V. It would very much further and facilitate all their Endeavours of this kind, to gain over the perſons who have the greateſt *Eſteem* and *Authority* in their Pariſhes, to a hearty concern for the honour of God and Religion: frequently ſuggeſting to them the Obligation that God has laid upon them to be *Examples* to others; and the great good that it is in their power to do, by ſetting a Pattern of *regular* living, and the unſpeakable miſchief of their *irregular* behaviour. For if once the better Sort can be brought to ſuch a Seriouſneſs and Sobriety, the reſt will more eaſily follow; *Example* being the moſt powerful Inſtruction; and Experience teaching us that *ſhame* and *fear*, which ariſe from the *Authority* of ſuch good Patterns, are commonly the moſt effectual reſtraints upon the meaner ſort.

VI. Where any Perſon is obſtinate in his Vices, and not to be reclaimed either by *Teaching* or *Example*, by *Exhortation* or *Reproof*; the *Ordinary* ought to be informed of it, that he may proceed to reclaim ſuch by *Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures*: and where thoſe are like to prove ineffectual, the *Civil Magiſtrate* muſt be applied to, and deſired to proceed againſt them according to the Laws in thoſe Caſes provided. Which *Information* and *Requeſt*, eſpecially in the Caſe of ſuch incorrigible Offenders, can be made by none ſo properly as by the *Clergy*; who may beſt be ſuppoſed to underſtand the neceſſity there is of having recourſe to the Civil Magiſtrate. And ſince our *Law-givers* have Enacted theſe temporal Puniſhments, on purpoſe to aſſiſt us in the diſcharge of our Miniſtry; it would be a great failing in us,

ſion of Triumph, and is apt to ſtagger the faith even of ſincere and unprejudic'd Chriſtians.

IV. It were to be wiſht, that the Clergy of every Neighbourhood, would agree upon frequent *Meetings*, to conſult for the good of Religion in general, and to adviſe with one another about any difficulties that may happen in their particular Cures. By what Methods any Evil Cuſtom may moſt eaſily be broken; How a ſinner may be moſt effectually reclaimed; and (in general) How each of them in their ſeveral circumſtances may contribute moſt to the advancement of Religion. Such *Conſultations* as theſe, beſides the mutual benefit of advice and inſtruction, will be a natural means to excite the zeal of ſome, to reduce the over-eagerneſs of others to a due temper, and to provoke All to a Religious Emulation in the improvement of *Piety* and *Order* within their reſpective Pariſhes. And Theſe *Meetings* might ſtill be made a greater advantage to the Clergy in carrying on the *Reformation* of Mens *Lives* and *Manners*, by inviting the *Church-Wardens* of their ſeveral Pariſhes, and other pious perſons among the *Laity*, to joyn with them in the Execution of the moſt probable methods that can be ſuggeſted for thoſe good Ends. And we may very reaſonably expect the happy Effects of ſuch a concurrence, from the Viſible Succeſs of that Noble Zeal wherewith ſo many about the great *Cities* in my Neighbourhood, do promote true Piety, and a *Reformation of Manners*. And therefore I deſire you that you will particularly excite your Clergy to the procuring ſuch aſſiſtances as theſe, for the more effectual diſcharge of their own duty.

V. It

V. It would very much further and facilitate all their Endeavours of this kind, to gain over the perſons who have the greateſt *Eſteem* and *Authority* in their Pariſhes, to a hearty concern for the honour of God and Religion: frequently ſuggeſting to them the Obligation that God has laid upon them to be *Examples* to others; and the great good that it is in their power to do, by ſetting a Pattern of *regular* living, and the unſpeakable miſchief of their *irregular* behaviour. For if once the better Sort can be brought to ſuch a Seriouſneſs and Sobriety, the reſt will more eaſily follow; *Example* being the moſt powerful Inſtruction; and Experience teaching us that *ſhame* and *fear*, which ariſe from the *Authority* of ſuch good Patterns, are commonly the moſt effectual reſtraints upon the meaner ſort.

VI. Where any Perſon is obſtinate in his Vices, and not to be reclaimed either by *Teaching* or *Example*, by *Exhortation* or *Reproof*; the *Ordinary* ought to be informed of it, that he may proceed to reclaim ſuch by *Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures*: and where thoſe are like to prove ineffectual, the *Civil Magiſtrate* muſt be applied to, and deſired to proceed againſt them according to the Laws in thoſe Caſes provided. Which *Information* and *Requeſt*, eſpecially in the Caſe of ſuch incorrigible Offenders, can be made by none ſo properly as by the *Clergy*; who may beſt be ſuppoſed to underſtand the neceſſity there is of having recourſe to the Civil Magiſtrate. And ſince our *Law-givers* have Enacted theſe temporal Puniſhments, on purpoſe to aſſiſt us in the diſcharge of our Miniſtry; it would be a great failing in us,

us, not to make use of them when all other Methods have been tried to little or no Effect.

VII. Every Pious Person of the Laity, should, if need be, be put in mind by the Clergy, that he ought to think himself obliged to use his best endeavours to have such Offenders punished by the *Civil Magistrate*, as can no otherwise be amended. And that when he hears his Neighbour *swear* or *blaspheme* the Name of God, or sees him offend in *drunkenness* or *prophanation of the Lords Day*, he ought not to neglect to give the Magistrate Notice of it: In such a Case to be called an *Informer*, will be so far from making any Man Odious in the Judgment of Sober Persons, that it will tend to his honour, when he makes it appear by his unblameable behaviour, and the care he takes of *Himself* and his own *Family*, that he doth it purely for the glory of God, and the good of his Brethren. Such well disposed persons as are resolved upon this, should be encouraged to meet as oft as they can, and to consult how they may most discreetly and effectually manage It in the places where they live.

VIII. As in reforming the *Laity*, they ought to use the Assistance of the *Civil Magistrate*; so if any of their own *Brethren* be an irregular Liver, and cannot be reclaimed by brotherly Admonition, the *neighbouring Clergy* should be strictly enjoyned to make it known to their *Diœcesan*, either by themselves or the *Archdeacon*, or by some other convenient way. That so the Offender may be Admonisht to live suitably to his Character; and if a bare Admonition will not do, he may be proceeded against by *Ecclesiastical*

ſtical *Cenſures*; for the preventing ſuch *Scandals* and *Miſchiefs*, as will always accompany the irregular Life of a *Miniſter of the Goſpel.*

IX. And whereas the Foundations of *Piety* and *Morality* are beſt laid at the beginning, in the Religious Education of *Children*; I cannot but wiſh that every one of the *Parochial Clergy* would be very diligent in *Catechiſing* the Children under their Care; and not only ſo, but in calling upon them afterwards, as they grow up, to give ſuch further Accounts of their Religion, as may be expected from a riper Age. That being thus carefully inſtructed in the *Faith* and *Duty* of a Chriſtian, they alſo may teach their Children the ſame; and ſo *Piety*, *Virtue*, and *Goodneſs*, may for ever flouriſh in our Church and Nation.

Theſe Directions with ſuch others of the ſame nature as will occur to you, I deſire may be Tranſmitted by you to the Clergy of your Diœceſe; for the Religious Government of themſelves, and their People, in theſe dangerous Times. So commending you and them to the Bleſſing of God, I reſt

Lambeth. April 4th. 1699.

Your Affectionate Brother

Tho. Cantuar.

Reverend Brother,

I *Send you herewith a Letter which I have received from our Moſt Reverend* Primate, *to be Communicated by you to the Clergy of your Archdeaconry; and withal a Copy of it for every one of our Brethren.*

I do ſo perfectly agree with His Grace *in all the particulars that are here recommended to us and to you all, that I make it my moſt earneſt deſire to you, that you will do all that in you lies to engage all our Brethren, to a Zealous purſuing of the Duties of their* Sacred Function, *in every one of thoſe things that are here laid before you.*

If we have any Regard to our ſelves and our Profeſſion, to our Church and our Holy Religion, and to the Honour of our God and Saviour, a due ſenſe of theſe will quicken our Induſtry, and even conſtrain us, to apply our utmoſt Zeal in ſuch times as theſe, to watch againſt the wiles of Satan, *and to beat down his* ſtrong holds, *and to advance the Kingdom of* Chriſt *in the hearts of our people; that we our ſelves may receive a full reward in the Day when the Great* Biſhop of our Souls *ſhall appear. I commend you and all my Brethren to the Bleſſing of God, and Remain*

April 6th. 1699.

Your Loving Brother

Jo. Oxon.

To the Reverend the Archdeacons of *Oxford.*

London, Printed by *Charles Bill*, and the Executrix of *Thomas Newcomb*, deceas'd, Printers to the Kings moſt Excellent Majeſty. 1699.